



தமிழீழ விடுதலைப் புலிகள் Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Press release

LTTE Political wing
22 December 2006

The unfortunate situation of child rights as propaganda tool

LTTE leadership is making every effort to stop the practice of underage recruitment within the movement. It has taken two decisive steps to achieve this goal. It has passed a Child Protection Law that sets the minimum age of recruitment into the movement at 17 and the minimum age for taking part in direct military combat at 18. It has strengthened the Child Protection Authority with certain powers to investigate future allegations of underage recruitment and take immediate action to release them.

LTTE Political Head, S P Tamilselvan, and the Child Protection Authority met Ambassador Allan Rock on November 10th and explained the prevailing context in which the underage youths are joining the LTTE movement; specifically the conditions that push the underage youths to lie about their age in order to join our movement. LTTE promised Ambassador Rock that it will take certain measures to eliminate underage recruitment within the movement. The Child Protection Authority is working closely with UNICEF in this regard and has begun to accelerate the process of releasing any remaining underage youths in the movement.

At this juncture, the Amparai incident on 18 December where LTTE members recruited some underage youths was very unfortunate. The LTTE leadership took immediate action to release the youths. The offenders have been called for investigations and will be punished.

In this context, the latest sensational reports in the media regarding underage recruitment within LTTE was a propagandist ploy by the Sri Lankan military to redirect serious accusations against it for assisting the Karuna group child abductions.



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Indeed, this propagandist tendency in handling this issue has failed to do justice to the child rights situation in the Tamil homeland. A 2006 report by the New York based Social Science Research Council (SSRC) following a study of war affected children in Vavuniya, which was funded by UNICEF, noted the same (www.ssrc.org/programs/children). Below are some excerpts from the report on this issue.

On page 2, *“The discourse and debate surrounding issues of children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) in Sri Lanka reveal a tendency to take a sensationalized, “propagandist” approach”*.

On page 115, *“Thus, the question of child recruitment by the LTTE has been raised in Sri Lanka in a specifically political context and in a particularly politicized manner. The Sri Lankan government at the time basically had a propagandist dimension, and it was an essential component of a political-military campaign called the “war for peace.” Strangely enough, the question of children being immediate victims of war, suffering death, injuries, displacement, loss of parents and families, and loss of education, has not received such propaganda value either nationally or internationally”*.